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U.S. & FRANCE AGREE TO ESTABLISH NASA SHUTTLE LANDING SITE

The governments of the United States of America and the French Republic have agreed to establish a Transoceanic Abort Landing (TAL) site for NASA's Space Shuttle at Istres Air Base 125, in the South of France.

The agreement was signed in Washington on June 7th by NASA Administrator Michael Griffin and the Ambassador of France, His Excellency Jean-David Levitte. The agreement covers Space Shuttle missions supporting the International Space Station. It provides for landing at the French Air Force base for a Shuttle that encounters an emergency during launch. The TAL sites could be used if a Shuttle is unable to reach orbit or a landing site in the U.S.

This agreement permits the U.S. government to place equipment and personnel at the base in advance of Space Shuttle missions; to perform weather monitoring; to ensure NASA navigational facilities and landing aids are operational; to provide search and rescue capability and medical evacuation support.

"Today's agreement follows a long history of mutually beneficial space cooperation between France and the United States," Griffin said. "We also appreciate the assistance of the French Air Force, which has taken a leading role in this effort."

Istres Air Base 125 was selected because of its location near the nominal ascent ground track of the Space Shuttle. The base also has one of the longest airstrips in Europe, more than 3.1 miles long. The base will be the third active TAL site, supplementing NASA's two other sites in Zaragoza and Moron, Spain. For NASA to launch a Shuttle, weather conditions must be acceptable at least at one TAL site.

For information about NASA and the agency's Space Shuttle program on the Web, visit:

<http://www.nasa.gov/returntoflight>

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